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SUBJECT: ANTI-CORRUPTION DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1990 ET AL
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD

Classified By: ACCO Joseph Stafford, reason 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Iraq's lead anti-corruption agency, the Commission on Integrity (COI), is expanding its outreach to the NGO community, according to COI head Judge Raheem Al-Ugaili. He agreed to attend the ACCO-hosted NGO event planned for the fall. Judge Raheem provided an update on the GOI's anti-bribery campaign, noting considerable variation among provinces as to the extent of abuses, according to results of COI surveys. He criticized Prime Minister Al-Maliki for failing to match his words with deeds on the corruption dossier. The GOI's action officer on the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) highlighted progress toward achieving the status of EITI candidate country. The official, the Oil Ministry's acting Inspector General, told us of plans to hold a conference in October to discuss the EITI Country Work Plan, saying all stakeholders (e.g., civil society, firms) would be invited. END SUMMARY.

COMMISSION ON INTEGRITY REACHES OUT TO NGO COMMUNITY

[1](#)2. (SBU) Anti-Corruption Coordinator and staff (ACCO) recently met with COI head Judge Raheem Al-Ugaili, who stated that among COI's current priorities was expanding its outreach to Iraq's NGO community. He said that the COI had recently sponsored a conference, attended by close to 30 Iraqi NGO's, in an effort to build support for the anti-corruption cause. ACCO informed Judge Raheem of its plans to host a NGO gathering in the fall; he agreed to attend. (COMMENT: Although Iraq's NGO community is generally regarded as still in the early stages of development by Western standards, there are several NGO's in Baghdad and elsewhere that are involved in anti-corruption matters as part of their overall focus on governance. The ACCO-hosted fall event is designed to promote an expanded NGO role in fostering citizens' awareness of corruption's negative impact in their daily lives. Discussions are planned to give the NGOs an understanding of the new, draft, National Anti-Corruption Strategy and how their efforts can support the GOI's work through this strategy to meet its obligations under the UN Convention against Corruption. END COMMENT).

ANTI-BRIBERY CAMPAIGN:

[1](#)3. (SBU) Judge Raheem provided an update on the GOI's anti-bribery campaign launched June 1 (ref A), asserting that the heightened scrutiny of government employees' behavior under the campaign was having an impact. He observed that while the ministries' Inspectors General had the lead role in conducting the campaign under the COI's overall direction, ultimately the initiative's success in curbing abuses depended on the personal commitment of office directors in each ministry. Judge Raheem maintained that, by and large,

office directors were actively supporting the campaign. He went on to assert that, judging from monthly surveys of the public conducted by COI, a decreasing number of citizens surveyed were reporting that they had paid bribes to obtain government services.

14. (SBU) Judge Raheem opined that the anti-bribery campaign would require two more years to be effective. He readily acknowledged that the battle against bribery was far from won and noted that, according to the surveys, there was considerable variation among the provinces in terms of the level of bribery. According to Judge Raheem, the results of a June survey indicated that bribery was most pervasive in Kirkuk, where 56 percent of those surveyed reporting paying bribes, followed by Ninewa (35 percent); the lowest incidence of bribery was in Wasit (3 percent). (COMMENT: The actual effectiveness of the COI's surveys in measuring the extent of bribery is unclear; for one thing, the methodology used in conducting the surveys is unknown. Our sources judge that while the campaign is currently having some success in reducing bribery, the jury is still very much out on how much of a dent the campaign will make in the well-established "culture of bribery" in many GOI offices. END COMMENT)

CRITICISM OF PRIME MINISTER

15. (C) Judge Raheem expressed disappointment at what he saw as Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki's failure to lend greater support for the anti-bribery campaign. Elaborating, Judge Raheem said Al-Maliki had so far done little to rally support for the campaign within his government by, for example,

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insisting that senior officials actively involve themselves in the effort. Citing the anti-bribery campaign as an example, the COI head went on to accuse the Prime Minister of failing to match his professed commitment to combating corruption with actual deeds. (COMMENT: Judge Raheem is careful not to criticize the Prime Minister publicly, doubtless for fear of being dismissed; the COI head's status is precarious, as he serves in an acting capacity -- he has yet to be confirmed in his position by the parliament and can be removed at will by Al-Maliki. However, Judge Raheem does not shrink from complaining about the Prime Minister privately, criticizing him to us in the past for allegedly interfering in the COI's activities. We continue to assess that the depth of the Prime Minister's commitment to reducing corruption is uncertain and that he is keen to exercise some control over the operations of the COI and other anti-corruption institutions. END COMMENT)

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (EITI)

16. (SBU) ACCO met recently with the GOI's action officer on EITI, the Oil Ministry's acting Inspector General, Alaa Mohie Al-Deen, who indicated progress in Iraq's effort to achieve the status of EITI candidate country. Al-Deen noted that the GOI had already fulfilled three of four requirements via issuance of a formal statement of its intention to implement its obligations under EITI, committing itself to work with civil society and companies on EITI implementation, and appointing a senior official -- Al-Deen himself -- to lead on EITI implementation. As for the fourth requirement, issuance of a Country Work Plan on EITI implementation, Al-Deen said that work on the document was underway, adding that the GOI had approached the World Bank for assistance in preparation and might also approach the USG in due course. Al-Deen stated that the GOI planned to host a conference on the Country Work Plan in October and would invite all stakeholders. He said the GOI hoped to have fully completed the requirements for EITI country candidate status by the end of the year -- "record time for any country," he remarked. He concluded with the assertion that the GOI was already fulfilling most

obligations under EITI, e.g., publicizing oil revenues.

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